United Nations E/2014/SR.1

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
21 February 2014

Original: English

Organizational session for 2014

Summary record of the 1st meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Tuesday, 14 January 2014, at 10 a.m.

Temporary President: Mr. Osorio ..... (Colombia)
President: Mr. Sajdik ..... (Austria)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.45 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. The Temporary President declared open the organizational session for 2014 of the Economic and Social Council.

Election of the President

2. **The Temporary President** said that, according to the equitable geographical rotation of the office of President, it was the turn of Western European and other States to nominate a candidate for President. Consequently, he took it that the Council wished to elect Mr. Sajdik (Austria), who had been nominated by those States, to the post of President of the Council.

3. *It was so decided.*

4. *Mr. Sajdik (Austria) was elected President by acclamation.*

5. *Mr. Sajdik (Austria) took the Chair.*

Statement by the President

6. **The President** said that the Council must maintain the momentum from Rio+20 and its follow-up and translate that into a meaningful post-2015 development agenda, with sustainable development goals that respected the 1992 Rio Principles. However, efforts should not be diverted from the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals which, as a result of their simplicity, measurability and time-bound nature, had made the development agenda both attractive and accessible to the international community and the general public. He urged States to persist and to make a common final push to achieve those targets, and to reflect on the lessons learned in pursuit of the Goals as the basis for future activities.

7. The outgoing Bureau had laid the groundwork for a fruitful dialogue on the theme of the 2014 annual ministerial review: "Addressing ongoing and emerging challenges for meeting the Millennium Development Goals in 2015 and for sustaining development gains in the future". The institutional framework and road map had been established for those discussions to take place in 2014 and beyond, and the Council must now draw up an action-oriented agenda to address the continuing and emerging challenges to the goals of eradicating poverty and ensuring the health of the planet with the engagement of all stakeholders.

8. General Assembly resolution 68/1 had recognized the Council's leadership by calling for the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development to be convened under the auspices of the Council. That Forum had been established to engage decision-makers from key policy areas and to monitor progress of the implementation of the post-2015 development agenda. That responsibility, coupled with the Council's original mandate for shaping the development agenda, put it at the heart of sustainable development activities. The resolution had also called for the establishment of an integration segment to monitor and promote the balanced integration of the three dimensions of sustainable development in the work of the Council.

9. During the 18-month transition period before the introduction of the July-to-July cycle in the work of the Council in 2015, much of the Council's attention should be devoted to articulating a new development agenda for the United Nations and formulating policy recommendations for a more rigorous and facts-based approach to measuring and shaping progress. In that connection, ways should be found for civil society, academia, non-governmental organizations and the private sector to engage more with the Council, and for building upon the Council's role as a multi-stakeholder platform. Every effort should also be made to engage the youth, who held the key to the future.

10. Going beyond traditional North-South thinking, the Council should ensure that official development assistance flows were used as catalysts, with donor and recipient countries both holding each other to account within the Development Cooperation Forum. As the new institutional framework recognized the interconnected nature of development, the Council's activities and impact would be amplified by a system-wide unified and common agenda. The needs of countries in special situations, such as least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing States and would also require the Council's dedicated attention, resources and guidance. Speaking in his national capacity, he said that those issues coincided with his own country's priorities and goals, which included the fight against corruption, human rights, climate change, sustainable energy, and full and productive employment, especially of young people.

11. For the Council to make a positive difference, it must adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances and live up to its mandate under the Charter of the United Nations. On the whole, the prospects were promising, with the potential for new ground to be broken, but only if Member States strived for the higher goal of better standards of living for all. Failure to do so might damage the Council and the whole United Nations system irreparably. He looked forward to the support of the Member States in building the future they all wanted.

Statement by the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs

12. **Mr. Wu** Hongbo (Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs) said that the foundation had been laid for a successful and smooth transition to the new Council cycle, as mandated by General Assembly resolution 68/1, which represented the most significant change to the work of the Council for 20 years and would serve to deepen its role in all aspects of development. The High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development was an essential part of the new institutional framework and the Council must do its utmost to integrate the three dimensions of sustainable development into all its activities. Achieving sustainable development was critical to realizing the future the world wanted.

13. The Council had an historic opportunity to define pathways to a sustainable future, with more jobs, clean energy security and a dignified standard of living for all; those developments were even more urgent for least developed countries, small island developing States, landlocked developing countries and countries emerging from conflict. Strategies based on the narrow pursuit of economic growth without regard for inclusiveness and the related environmental and social considerations would fail. Such strategies also risked harming the ecosphere irreparably as well as the fundamental rights of the citizens who depended upon it. A lack of coherence between social inclusion, environmental protection and economic policies could undermine all of the three objectives. Integrating those elements correctly would consolidate the Council's position at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda and magnify the impact of its work. Member States must therefore work to combine the practical and operational strengths of the United Nations system with the Council's analytical and policy and normative guidance roles. In that connection, he welcomed the steps being taken by the Council to address the unified development agenda.

14. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs was fully committed to that crucial phase of the Council's reform. In that connection, it would continue to strengthen its analytical capacities so as to improve its support for the work of the Council and, pursuant to General Assembly resolution 68/1, would make recommendations to the Secretary-General to promote collaboration across the United Nations system, in order to better utilize existing resources of the system to broaden support to the Council. The emerging and ongoing challenges facing Member States would require the collective expertise of the Council in order to adopt action-led solutions that would bring about sustainable development and eradicate poverty.

Election of the Bureau

15. **The President** said that three candidates had been nominated to fill the vacancies for the posts of Vice-Presidents of the Council from African States, Asia-Pacific States, and Latin American and Caribbean States, while consultations were still ongoing among the Eastern European States, which would nominate a candidate at a later date. He took it that the Council wished to elect the candidates nominated by those regional groups.

16. *It was so decided.*

17. *Mr. Dabbashi (Libya), Mr. Oh Joon (Republic of Korea) and Mr. García González (El Salvador) were elected Vice-Presidents of the Council by acclamation.*

Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters (E/2014/1 and E/2014/2)

18. **The President** said that the Council's provisional agenda and programme of work for 2014, as contained in document E/2014/1, had been prepared in accordance with the provisions of General Assembly resolution 68/1, in which the Assembly had decided that the Council should adjust its programme of work to a July-to-July cycle with immediate effect, and that the Council should continue to have one substantive and one organizational session. As stipulated in resolution 68/1, the new arrangements would not lead to an increase in the number of meeting days currently provided for the Council. He drew the Council's attention to its resolution 2013/24 on tax matters, in

which the Council had decided to hold, on an annual basis, a special meeting of the Council to consider international cooperation in tax matters, including, as appropriate, its contribution to mobilizing domestic financial resources for development and the institutional arrangements to promote such cooperation. Steps were being taken to identify a date for that mandated meeting and delegations would be kept informed of the matter.

19. As the Council's provisional agenda and programme of work for 2014, as contained in document E/2014/1, had only been made available to delegations on the eve of the current meeting, he took it that delegations wished to be given more time to review it and that action on the matter should therefore be postponed to a later date.

20. *It was so decided.*

21. **The President** proposed that, as in the past, lots should be drawn to determine which delegation would occupy the first seat in the Council seating arrangements for 2014.

22. *The delegation of the Republic of Korea was selected by the drawing of lots to take the first seat.*

The meeting rose at 11.20 a.m.